

CITY OF BALTIMORE

MARTIN O'MALLEY, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner
210 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21202

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Ingrid Wells, Public Information Officer
Phone: 443-984-2623 or Ingrid.wells@baltimorecity.gov

Lead Contamination Found in "Princess Collection"

August 4, 2006 – As part of an ongoing investigation of lead in children's jewelry, the Baltimore City Health Department is warning the public of one item with very high levels of lead that is currently being sold and marketed to young girls.

The item is a ring sold as part of the "Princess Collection" in the Claire's Club line of products at Claire's. In a total lead analysis test performed by Penniman and Browne, Inc. of Baltimore using the methodology of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, elements of the ring tested as high as 6.8% lead by weight. This is more than 100 times the standard for lead in paint.



"If ingested accidentally, this ring could cause lead poisoning and seriously threaten the health of a child," said Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health.

Ruth Ann Norton, executive director of the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, a national advocacy organization, added, "We need to heighten the awareness of parents and communities across this country to the serious dangers that may exist in these products intended for our children. Instead of bringing joy, this costume jewelry and similar products on the market could have a deadly result."

The Health Department has notified the Consumer Product Safety Commission of the finding. The Health Department also notified the local store and district manager for Claire's Accessories. In a letter to the company chief executive officers today, Dr. Sharfstein has asked that this product and any others with similar manufacturing practices and materials be immediately removed from stores nationwide. Dr. Sharfstein wrote that he will issue an order barring the ring's sale in the city if not kept from shelves in Baltimore today.

In mid-February 2006, a four-year old boy in Minneapolis died after ingesting a Reebok charm bracelet that was found to consist of 99.1% lead. In 2004, a four-year old boy required intensive care in Oregon after ingesting a small medallion that was 38.8% lead. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found that "alternatives to lead are available" for children's jewelry and has called for "restriction or elimination of nonessential uses of lead in consumer products."

This week, ABC2NEWS in Baltimore reported finding lead using x-ray fluorescence technology in numerous children's products sold in the Baltimore area. ABC2NEWS reported that a Hillary Duff necklace sold at Claire's was 41% lead by weight, and that Accessories did not respond to calls seeking comment.

“Parents need to be very vigilant about what young children are putting in their mouths,” said Dr. Sharfstein. “Agencies from the federal to local levels must also be more involved to protect children.”

The test result released today was obtained as part of a larger investigation on lead in children’s jewelry in Baltimore City. The Health Department will release the full results of this investigation and proposed actions in coming weeks.

Web sites:

Claire’s Club:

http://www.clares.com/atclaires_clairesclub.asp?top=atc&name=

CDC Statement:

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm55d323a1.htm>

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